THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • APRIL 23, 2021 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 30 • LATE CITY EDITION

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FINMIN ASKS BANKS TO FOOT 'INTEREST ON INTEREST' BILL

The Union Finance Ministry has informally asked banks to reimburse or adjust the compound interest charged during the loan moratorium period

GOVT IN NO MOOD TO SHARE ₹8,000-CR BURDEN

Banks had approached the Finance Ministry for help in settling the compound interest waiver, estimated at around ₹8,000 crore but the government is in no mood to compensate lenders. The Supreme Court had on March 23 ruled banks cannot charge interest on interest for accounts that sought a moratorium last year and that the amount must be refunded

RISING COVID CASES TO HIT RECOVERY: RBI

- The uncertainty due to the surge in Covid cases and localised lockdowns prompted RBI to vote for status quo in interest rates, as per minutes of the MPC meeting released on Thursday
- Covid-19 is the single biggest factor blocking the path to economic recovery, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das said in the meeting | P12

June 2-4
NEXT MEETING OF THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA'S MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

No reason to appoint Salve: Dave

"There is no reason why Mr Harish Salve should again and again be appointed by Chief Justice Bobde as amicus curiae. He has been a non-resident and living in London for a long time. He does not know the realities of India," says Dushyant Dave

Let HCs hear matter: SC Bar body

"High Courts appear to be best suited to deal with the situation, hence it would be proper to allow the Hon'ble High Courts to continue dealing with the present issue," the Supreme Court Bar Association's intervention petition before the top court

SC WAKES UP, LEGAL EAGLES FRET

Six high courts hearing Covid cases is creating some confusion and diversion of resources, says bench; experts want HCs to stay in play

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday took *suo motu* cognisance of the health emergency caused by Covid-19 pandemic though a clutch of high courts are already seized of the matter, a decision that was panned by a section of senior lawyers.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde took note of the fact that high courts of Delhi, Bombay, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Calcutta and Allahabad were dealing with issues related to Covid and asked the Centre to present a national plan to face the health crisis.

"The situation in various parts of the country is grim. There seems to be a sudden surge in the number of Covid patients and mortality. Nonetheless it seems that a certain amount of panic has been generated and people have invoked the jurisdiction of several high courts in the country seeking relief," the order read.

Scrutiny of four points

The court said it wanted to take up supply of oxygen and essential drugs, method and manner of vaccination and the power to declare lockdown. "We want the power to clear lockdown to be with states and it should not be a judicial decision," the CJI said

"They (HCs) are exercising jurisdiction in best interest. But it is creating confusion and diversion of resources," the bench observed, adding, "We are almost in a national emergency."

"The high courts have passed certain orders which may have the effect of accelerating and prioritizing the services to a certain set of people and slowing down the availability of these resources to certain other groups whether the groups are local, regional or otherwise," the detailed order stated. The bench said it intended to transfer to itself some of the related issues pending in various high courts.

But senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi later said he completely disagreed with the view of the Supreme Court. "High Courts are competent to deal with the issue as it unfolds in the concerned state... It's a retrograde step. High Court will become redundant now," he reasoned.

Appointing senior advocate Harish Salve as amicus curiae to assist it, the bench issued notice to the Centre and posted the matter for Friday, the last working day of CJI Bobde. Justice N V Ramana will take over as the next CJI on Saturday.

During the hearing, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta asked the bench, "Do we respond to high courts now or we respond here?" "We will issue notice to the Centre and then we will issue notice to high courts and eventually we will bring some issues here. All we want is a national plan on these issues," the CJI said. The bench told Mehta it didn't intend to supersede any order of the high courts as of now.

AT 3.14 LAKH, HIGHEST-EVER SINGLE-DAY SPIKE IN ANY COUNTRY

Active cases now at **22,91,428** comprising **14.38%** of the total infections

27,27,05,103 Samples tested up to April 21

16,51,711 Samples tested on Wednesday across country

NATIONWIDE

	APRIL 21	APRIL 22
Fresh cases	2,95,041	3,14,835
Recoveries	1,67,457	1,78,841
Deaths	2,023	2,104

Uttar Pradesh: Long queues at cremation centres in Agra as bodies pile up

New Delhi: Centre urges corporates to consider converting their vacant office buildings into temporary Covid care facilities

Jerusalem: Israel issues travel warning for India and six other countries

A Covid-19 patient waits for admission outside the Lok Nayak Jaiprakash Narayan Hospital in New Delhi on Thursday | SHEKHAR YADAV

1 cr doses @ ₹400 cr, over 90 tankers for O_2

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

WITH two days to go for the opening of registrations for inoculation of those aged between 18 and 44 years, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Thursday approved the purchase of one crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines at a cost of ₹400 crore.

The state will place an order for Covishield from Serum Institute of India, Pune. The company which is producing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in India, has set the price at ₹150 per dose for the Union Government, ₹400 for state governments and ₹600 for private hospitals.

The vaccine doses will be administered to citizens aged between 18 and 44 starting May 1.

Meanwhile, the supply of oxygen is being streamlined in Karnataka and almost all 94 tankers carrying industrial gases are being put to use for emergency medical purposes, according to industry sources.

"There are 94 tankers in the state of which 45 carried liquid oxygen and the rest carried other industrial gases like nitrogen and argon. With very few exceptions, almost all the tankers have been flushed off the other gases and are being used to supply medical oxygen," said the sources.

The government is also looking at other resources and suppliers to further augment oxygen supply to the state.

"While the oxygen plants have accelerated their production, there are not enough tankers to carry it," the sources pointed out.

CONTINUED ON: P4

STATEWIDE

	APRIL 21	APRIL 22
Fresh cases	23,558	25,795
Active cases	1,76,188	1,96,236
Deaths	116	123
Recoveries	6,412	5,624
Fresh cases in B'luru Urban	13,640	15,244

Lockdown? Or not? Alarm bells go off

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

JUST a day before the weekend lockdown was to come into effect, confusion and a sense of panic prevailed in many parts of the state with several shops and businesses being ordered to close down by the local authorities.

The cause of this was a State Government clarification, released on Thursday, to the April 20 guidelines ordering a majority of shops and commercial establishments, that were not exempted from closure, to remain closed until 6 am on May 4.

CONTINUED ON: P4

Ensured oxygen supply to states, says Centre

States' O_2 quota raised

In view of the surge in oxygen demand due to an exponential rise in number of Covid patients admitted in hospitals, the Centre has raised the quota of oxygen for states

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

AMID reports of acute shortage of oxygen in some states and instances of some private hospitals moving court for urgent directions to ensure timely supply of the life-saving gas, the Centre on Thursday said it is giving 6,822 MT of liquid medical oxygen per day to 20 states against a demand of 6,785 MT/day. The announcement came after a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take stock of the situation.

In the review meeting, the PM stressed on increasing production of oxygen, raising the speed of distribution and using innovative ways to provide oxygen support to health facilities. He also said that states should come down heavily on hoarding.

According to the Centre, availability of liquid medical oxygen has been raised by 3,300 MT per day with contributions from private and public steel plants, industries, oxygen manufacturers as well as through prohibition of supply of oxygen for non-essential industries.

Modi also said there is a need to fix responsibility with the local administration in cases of obstruction and also asked ministries to explore various innovative ways to increase production and supply of oxygen.

Covid situation precarious, says Delhi HC

NEW DELHI: Observing that the Covid-19 situation in the National Capital has turned 'precarious', with many hospitals running out of oxygen, the Delhi High Court on Thursday directed the Central Government to ensure the all-important gas is supplied to the city as per the planned allocation, and without any hindrances. "As it stands, we all know that this country is being run by God," observed an anguished bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli, which was of the view that all measures should be taken for removing obstructions in the transportation of oxygen. If the government wants, it can do anything and can even make 'heaven meet Earth,' it said.

PUTTING THE VACCINATION FIRST!

Your safety is the nation's safety.

As vaccinations have opened for ages above 45, it's time to not delay taking the shot any longer. Keep yourself and your family safe. Get yourself vaccinated today.

Dr.P.C.Rayulu
MEMBER- ZRUCC, S.C.Rlys.,
Ministry of Railways & FCI Slcc -AP,
Ministry of consumer Affairs & PDS.Govt. of India.
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Govindaraja Arts College Walker association, Tirupati,
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Dr. Y.S.R Praja Prasthanam Seva Trust (R)
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT - (CRO)Consumer Rights Organization.

PCR GROUP OF COMPANIES
(Poineer`s in Logistics)

US to halve emissions, India to go green by '30

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

US President Joe Biden on Thursday said America will cut its carbon emissions by up to 52% by the end of this decade, to bring them down to the levels in 2005. In his address to the Leaders' Summit on Climate, hosted by the US, Biden said his country and other big economies have an obligation to bring down greenhouse emissions.

The announcement marks the US' return to global climate efforts after four years of withdrawal under former president Donald Trump. America believes its ambitious new plan will encourage other polluting majors such as China to take impactful steps. However, experts think the US may not be able to achieve the long-term target, given the constantly shifting political environment.

Addressing the summit, PM Narendra Modi announced the launch of India-US Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership to mobilise investments and enable green collaborations. "In its new nationally determined contribution, the US has set an economy-wide target of reducing its net greenhouse gas emissions by 50-52 per cent below 2005 levels in 2030. As part of its climate mitigation efforts, India has set a target of installing 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030... Through this collaboration, India and the SU aim to demonstrate how the world can align swift climate action with inclusive and resilient economic development, taking into account national circumstances and sustainable development priorities," a joint statement read.

Despite our development challenges, we have taken many bold steps on clean energy, energy efficiency, afforestation and biodiversity. That's why we are among the few countries whose indices are 2-degree Celsius compatible - PM Narendra Modi